

YAMANAKA MON'DOO
山中問答

Questions and Answers at Yamanaka

Recorded by
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This is a record of what Basyoo said at Yamanaka Hot Springs in Kanazawa when Hokusi went to meet him on the famous journey described in Oku-no hosomichi 奥の細道 (The Narrow Road to the North).

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"People who desire to practice the Road of Hai in Basyoo's Correct Style should not go astray over worldly gain or loss, nor should they be attached to the language of crows, herons, horses and deer.¹ Placing heaven and earth at their right side, without forgetting the ten thousand myriad things -- the mountains, rivers, grasses, trees, and human relationships' basic feelings -- they should play among scattering lowers and falling leaves. When they play in such forms, the Road will go through to the old and the new, and without losing the principle of the permanent (*hueki* 不易 "the unchanging, the eternal"), they will cross to the flowing-and-going's (*ryuukoo* 流行) changes. Then their hearts' desires will be vast and unhindered by things. Today's changes they will freely deal with, they will be harmonious in the world and complete with human feelings." -- So said the Old Man.

"The heart of the Correct Style of Haikai goes through all the ten thousand things' Road and through all actions, and should never stop on one side. In the World, the characters for *haikai* have been explained: there are people who say that the character *hai* 誹 in *haikai* is used purely for its sound, and others that the character 俳 should be used instead. Or some have drawn on the comical (*kokkei* 滑稽) of the Book of History (*Siki* 史記), and others have dug into other reports. However, in our school, having seen through the saying that "in *haikai* there are no people of old", and entrusting to the principle of playing with words, we use both characters for *hai*. With other schools, it is not necessary to argue." -- So the Old Man said.

There are two things: The Road's principles (*doori* 道理) and theory and specious argumentation (*rikutu* 理屈):--

People who play in the *haikai* Road's principles turn the *haikai*. Those who go astray in *haikai*'s theory and argumentation don't turn it -- or are turned by it. They only argue about what is skilful and not skilful and know nothing about the Road that *haikai* tells of. The Old Man has praised those who are deeply intent on the Correct Style's empty (*kyo* 虚) - actual (*zitu* 実) as his school's advanced disciples.

1. Crows-herons, black and white -- words of argument. "Horse-deer" represents dullness of mind, without reason or common sense, hence this term is used to mean "extreme" in reference to the language of useless argument and ignorance.